

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable reconsideration of this application, in view of the above amendments and the following remarks, is respectfully requested.

Claims 1, 5-14, and 16-19 are pending in this application. By this amendment, Claims 1, 8, 11-13 and 19 have been amended; and Claims 2-4 and 15 have been canceled. The subject matter of canceled Claims 2-4 has been incorporated into independent Claim 1 and the subject matter of canceled Claim 15 has been incorporated into independent Claim 13. The amendments to Claims 8, 11, 12 and 19 have been made to change the dependency thereof. Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that no new matter has been entered.

In the outstanding Office Action, Claim 8 was objected to; Claims 1-3, 5-7, and 11-18 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by Tami et al. (U.S. 2004/0059634 A1, hereinafter “Tami”);¹ Claims 4, 8 and 9 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Tami in view of Can et al. (U.S. 2002/0038267 A1, hereinafter “Can”); and Claim 10 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Tami in view of Can and further in view of Kobayashi et al. (U.S. 2004/0083260 A1, hereinafter “Kobayashi”).

Pursuant to the objection to Claim 8, the first occurrence thereof has been canceled.

Claim 1 recites:

wherein each office supply includes an IC chip by which the office supply can be identified, and the IC chip includes an identification information sending part for sending identification information of the office supply to the image forming apparatus by radio,

the image forming apparatus further comprising:

a counting part for counting the number of remaining office supplies based on the identification information sent from each IC chip; and

¹ Although the rejection was based on 35 U.S.C. § 102(e), it could have been based on 35 U.S.C. § 102(a).

a part for sending the number of the remaining office supplies to the office supply information server,

wherein the office supply information server sends a supply replenishment prompt signal for prompting the user to replenish the office supply to the image forming apparatus when the remaining number is smaller than a predetermined number for the office supply, and the image forming apparatus displays information based on the supply replenishment prompt signal on the touch panel, and orders the office supply from the office supply information server by using the client information sending part based on information input from the touch panel.

Claim 13 recites:

the office supply information server sends a supply replenishment prompt signal for prompting a user of the image forming apparatus to replenish the office supply to the image forming apparatus when the remaining number is smaller than a predetermined number for the office supply.

It is respectfully submitted that the above features are neither disclosed by nor rendered obvious by Tami, Can, Kobayashi or any conceivable combination thereof.

With regard to Claim 4, the subject matter of which has been incorporated into amended Claim 1, the Office Action acknowledges:

Tami does not explicitly disclose wherein the office supply includes an IC chip by which the office supply can be identified, and the IC chip includes an identification information sending part for sending identification information of the office supply to the image forming apparatus by radio, the image forming apparatus further comprising: a counting part for counting the number of remaining supplies based on the identification information sent from each IC chip.

Thereafter, the Office Action asserts:

Can teaches an inventory management system that makes use of radio frequency ID tags track supplies (Can: [0010-0015]). Can further provides the advantage of providing “accurate and real time information related to available inventory” (Can: Abstract).

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art, having the teachings of Tami and Can before them at the time the invention was made to modify the inventory management

system of Tami to include integrated circuit radio frequency tags as taught by Can.

One of ordinary skill in the art would have been motivated to make this modification in order to provide “accurate and real time information related to available inventory” in view of Can.

Applicants respectfully disagree.

Can states “[r]adio frequency identification (RFID) is a technology that uses radio frequency waves to transfer data between a reader and a movable item.”² Can indicates that “an RFID tag is associated with each item (or carton or person) to be tracked.”³ Can then states “[t]he ‘tag readers’ preferably include both an antenna for capturing signals from the tags and a ‘reader’ that interprets the radio frequency into digital information.”⁴ Can adds “[t]he system also includes at least one and typically a plurality of host computers for receiving and processing information from the tag readers.”⁵ Therefore, Can describes tags that must be read with a dedicated reader. There is no description in Can that the tag includes an IC chip. Therefore, the tags described in Can do not include an identification information sending part for sending identification information of the office supply to the image forming apparatus by radio as recited in Claim 1. That is, the tags can only communicate with the dedicated reader. Therefore, Can fails to describe the features of Claim 1 quoted above.

With regard to original Claim 15, the subject matter of which has been incorporated into independent Claim 13, the Office Action asserts:

Tami further discloses wherein the office supply information server receives a number of remaining office supplies in the image forming apparatus (Tami: [0077], [0054-0058], and the office supply information server sends a supply order prompt message for prompting a user of the image forming apparatus to order the office supply to the image forming apparatus when the remaining number is smaller than a predetermined number for the office supply (“In the preferred embodiment, the method

² Paragraph [0005].

³ Paragraph [0012].

⁴ Paragraph [0014].

⁵ Paragraph [0015].

of the present invention allows for automatic stock replenishment based on POS scan data with re-order points configurable in the inventory file.” Tami: [0077], “For example, a database of in-store-inventory can be analyzed for generating computer assisted re-stocking orders” Tami: [0061]).

Applicants respectfully disagree.

Tami describes the use of handheld units 58 to read the bar code of stock items.

“[t]he handheld units 58 are interfaced with an in-store Point Of Sale (POS) system and the inventory management system discussed earlier to provide and display current inventory and pricing data on each stock item bar code that it reads.”⁶ Tami adds “the handheld units 58 can be programmed to query the ISP 14 to provide computer assisted ordering information for the stock item read.”⁷ Tami explains “a database of in-store-inventory can be analyzed for generating computer assisted re-stocking orders, or be analyzed for customer purchasing preferences in a given geographic location.”⁸ Thus, in Tami, “the POS system 108 is integrated with the inventory management system 114, to capture and track all inventory received and shipments against invoice, as well as quantity ordered vs. quantity received.”⁹ Thus, Tami explains, “the method of the present invention allows for automatic stock replenishment based on POS scan data with re-order points configurable in the inventory file.”¹⁰ Therefore, Tami describes an automatic computer based stock replenishment system based on data obtained from scanning stock item bar codes. There is no description in Tami that the office supply information server sends a supply replenishment prompt signal for prompting a user of the image forming apparatus to replenish the office supply to the image forming apparatus when the remaining numbers is smaller than a predetermined number for the office supply as recited in Claim 13.

⁶ Paragraph [0054].

⁷ Paragraph [0058].

⁸ Paragraph [0061].

⁹ Paragraph [0077].

¹⁰ Paragraph [0077].

It is respectfully submitted that dependent Claims 5-12, 14 and 16-19 are patentable at least for the reasons argued above with regard to the claims from which they depend.

Accordingly, it is respectfully requested that the rejections of Claims 1, 5-14, and 16-19 be reconsidered and withdrawn, and that Claims 1, 5-14, and 16-19 be found allowable.

Consequently, for the reasons discussed in detail above no further issues are believed to be outstanding in the present application and the present application is believed to be in condition for formal allowance. Therefore, a Notice of Allowance is earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner deem that any further action is necessary to place this application in even better form for allowance, the Examiner is encouraged to contact the undersigned representative at the below-listed telephone number.

Respectfully submitted,

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